



72nd Annual Meeting Session Recap



West

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Big Sky

July 16-20, 2019

Montana

Contents

Tuesday, July 16	3
Chair's Forum – Foster Care	3
Wednesday, July 17	4
Daylight Savings Forum	4
Public Safety Committee	4
Women in Politics	5
Health Committee	6
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	7
International Program	8
Energy Committee	9
Annual Legislative Training Assembly I (ALTA)	9
North America Summit	10
Thursday, July 18.....	10
Suicide Prevention Forum	10
Economic Development Committee	11
Canada Relations Committee	11
Legislative Oversight Working Group	12
Agriculture Committee	12
Education Committee	13
Friday, July 19.....	14
Water & Environment Committee	14
Census 2020	15
Westrends Board	16
Annual Legislative Training Assembly II (ALTA)	17
U.S. Supreme Court Review	17
Saturday, July 20	18
Chair's Forum – Forest and Rangeland Management	18

Each year CSG West hosts its Annual Meeting inviting members to gather with legislative colleagues, government officials, and private sector representatives for a discussion of regional policy concerns. Standing policy committees convening during the meeting offer committee members an opportunity to engage with topic experts and one another on key issues. The goal of the meeting is to provide a forum where collaborative conversations can take place aimed at developing solutions that improve policy efforts at the state and regional level. In addition to policy committees, topic forums invite attendees to explore policy conversations while development sessions offer a chance to sharpen professional skills applicable to the legislative environment.

This report is a compilation of the sessions hosted during the 72nd CSG West Annual Meeting. It is intended to provide a brief overview of each session with additional information available on the CSG West website, including committee reports and presentation materials. We hope this information is useful and look forward to seeing you next year at the 73rd CSG West Annual Meeting in Jackson, Wyoming!



Tuesday, July 16

Chair's Forum – Foster Care

Due to passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 and its groundbreaking changes in federal child welfare funding and reimbursement, states have significant opportunities to improve the lives of children either in foster care or at-risk of entering foster care. With states beginning implementation, legislative leaders were invited to learn and discuss the successes achieved, the promising practices now emerging, and the challenges that remain ahead.

The forum was made possible through the support of the Casey Family Programs whose experts provided comprehensive national and state-specific data, reviewed best practices and strategies, and provided firsthand experience from a parent's perspective. Breakout sessions provided additional opportunities for focused conversation addressing issues related to the vulnerabilities of young children, the costs of trauma, and potential return on investment for prevention services. Key themes included the new opportunities to intervene earlier and more effectively to support intact families at risk for child welfare involvement, and that new funding for prevention offers an opportunity to prevent the need for out of home placements – which is less costly, and less traumatic on children. Throughout the conversations, participants raised concerns regarding caseloads and burn-out of child welfare caseworkers suggesting that training and other incentives is a key component to improving outcomes for at-risk families and children.

Session Speakers:

Susan Robison – Director of State Relations, Casey Family Programs

China Darrington - Director of State Relations, St. John's Recovery Outreach Center

Ken DeCerchio - Program Director, National Center for Substance Abuse and Child Welfare/Child and Family Futures

Christine Calpin - Managing Director on Public Policy, Casey Family Programs

Dr. Sheila Idzerda, MD BCP, Billings Clinic Bozeman, Acorn Pediatrics

Charles Sallee – Deputy Director, New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee



Wednesday, July 17

Daylight Savings Forum

Utah Representative Ray Ward led a discussion addressing recent policy shifts related to daylight savings. Citing a recent statistic that 84% of people no longer think that changing the clocks make sense, the conversation focused on policy shifts that would stop the annual time changes. Interactive dialogue between legislative peers concluded that to effectively change policy related to daylight savings, states should ensure that their neighboring states are in agreement to initiate a collective effort.

Public Safety Committee

With jail and prison populations increasing over the decades, states have experienced unprecedented overcrowding creating budget strains and driving an effort to explore criminal justice reform. In this session, committee members heard from topic experts sharing data, analysis, and perspectives on various aspects of the justice system. Whether addressing juvenile justice reform, supervision violations, sentencing thresholds, or the general culture of the justice system, the common recommendation made by all presenters is the vital need for assessment, measurement, and evaluation to making substantive and effective changes.

In reviewing the current data available, several key takeaways were presented and discussed. Recent data on the topic of supervision violations suggests that re-thinking responses to violations can have a positive impact on the offender, the community, and the state budget. Specifically, positive incentives proved far more effective than negative threats when evaluating successful outcomes. Adding another level of perspective to the conversation, a recount of first-hand experience with the justice system and re-entry process reiterated the need for assessment and measurement as a crucial tool to successfully reform the system and the culture it creates.

Session Speakers:

Susanne DiPietro – Executive Director, Alaska Judicial Council

Tarra Simmons – Project Director, Public Defender Association

Tracey Velaquez – Manager, Criminal Justice Research at Pew Charitable Trusts

Sarah Wurzburg – Deputy Program Director of Behavioral Health, The Council of State Governments Justice Center

Women in Politics

Based on research conducted over the past several years, conversations of women in politics have focused on the differences in campaign experience between women candidates and their male counterparts. During this session, participants heard recommendations from Dr. Gayle Alberda of ways to better leverage social media platforms to promote themselves and their message. A key point of conversation addressed the evolution of the voter base. Generational nuances related to platform preference increase the need to diversify outreach methods. In doing so, candidates must be careful to remain consistent in their messaging while also delivering a dose of authentic personality. When appropriately applied, these efforts offer an opportunity to increase outreach, as well as a forum to address negative comments effectively.

The second part of the session fostered a conversation between selected panelists and attendees on how to better engage women's voices through leadership. In sharing their experiences, insights, and responses to questions the panelists focused on a few important takeaways. Recognition of the significant and ongoing impact of the Me Too movement inspired much conversation. Specific recommendations from the panel included the need to build trust and respect, the value of listening, and the power of advocating for others. Specific to the role of social media and the rise of provocative comments, the panel suggested flexing the power of your supporters to shift the conversation to a productive, rather than confrontational.

Session Speaker:

Dr. Gayle Alberda – Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Administration, Fairfield University

Panelists:

Senator Randi Becker, Washington
Senate Republican Caucus Chair

Representative Joy San Buenaventura, Hawai'i
House Majority Whip

Representative Cathy Connolly, Wyoming
House Minority Floor Leader



Health Committee

Access to healthcare is a priority concern that touches lives in many ways. During this session, the committee engaged presenters and participants in conversation on two key aspects of healthcare – industry trends and opportunities to improve behavioral health within the corrections system. Both topics fostered intense discussion of challenges, successes, and hopes for change.

Speaking to the topic of behavioral health and its relationship to corrections, Sarah Wurzburg, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health for the CSG Justice Center, offered a review of current state led efforts to improve access to care during incarceration. Her remarks focused on several areas in which procedural changes can improve health outcomes, as well as reduce the risk of recidivism. A few key recommendations include more accurate measurements across the system to assess efficacy, relapse prevention programs, and better collaboration between all participants in the treatment process – providers, payment resources, and community support systems.

Wil Carroll, Principal of Government and Public Services with Deloitte Consulting, offered an overview of expected trends in healthcare delivery over the next twenty years. Current predictions show that advancements in medical technology will exponentially increase and extend across the entire range of care services. Additionally, a shift toward prevention and wellness is anticipated along with an increase in smaller medical facilities offering easier access to patients. With greater access through technology, trends predict a more empowered healthcare consumer provided that government can assist in public education and access.

Conversation between members, attendees, and presenters provided an opportunity for a robust exchange of ideas, experiences, and concerns related to both topics. Common concerns centered around access, education, funding, and government assistance in supporting these efforts.

Session Speakers:

Wil Carroll – Principal of Government & Public Services, Deloitte Consulting, LLP

Sarah Wurzburg – Deputy Program Director of Behavioral Health, The Council of State Governments Justice Center

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

With several states passing legislation this year, the topic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) has received renewed attention. During this session, attendees participated in a review of the history, existing data, and challenges related to developing legislation to address this life-threatening issue.

A key concern raised is the lack of extensive data with which to fully evaluate the issue and develop corrective efforts. Lending firsthand experience, a panel discussion of legislators who have worked to pass legislation in their states shared their stories along with lessons learned. The biggest legislative hurdles identified were jurisdictional issues, missing data, funding, and general politics. The collective lesson learned is to connect involved parties sooner for a more collaborative effort.

As state level work continues to address this issue, the hope is that hurdles can be cleared to ensure that indigenous women and girls no longer experience murder as their third leading cause of death.

Forum Speaker:

Aren Sparck, MUP - Government Affairs Officer, Seattle Indian Health Board

Forum Facilitator:

Representative Sharon Stewart-Peregoy, M.Ed. – Montana House of Representatives

Forum Panelists:

Representative Jennifer Jermaine – Arizona House of Representatives

Hollie Mackey, Ph.D., MLS - Associate Professor, University of Oklahoma

Representative Gina Mosbrucker – Washington House of Representatives

Representative Rae Peppers – Montana House of Representatives

Video Presenters:

Ivan & Ivy MacDonald – Blackfeet Filmmakers, “When They Were Here”



International Program

With technology usage touching all aspects of our lives, data privacy has become a key concern for many people. In this session, attendees heard from topic experts about efforts to bolster privacy protections including a one-year review of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as well as state led efforts.

The review of the GDPR offered a reminder that the version implemented in 2018 was not new, but rather an update to established data protections. Key to the modernization efforts were changes to the personal and material scope identifying key rights and responsibilities for both consumers and companies. Additionally, the component of international transferability of these rights and obligations ensures far reaching protections.

Concluding the review of GDPR, the conversation focused on state level efforts to support data privacy. Because federal legislation has been pending, states have taken up the charge by implementing their own policies. While these initiatives are in line with the U.S. tradition of states driving national change, it has also created a patchwork of varied initiatives. A common thread of the presentations and conversation is that through the implementation of broader protections, consumers and companies are developing an increased awareness of rights and responsibilities.

Session Speakers:

Jennifer Brody – Legislative Manager, Access Now

Dr. Rainer Wessely - First Secretary - Trade and Agriculture Section / Competition and Justice, Delegation of the European Union to the United States

“We are the state and the state is us.”

Jon Meacham – July 17 Keynote Speaker



Energy Committee

Discussions on energy policy in the western region often produce a range of perspectives. This year's committee discussions focused on two topics of great debate – a regional energy grid and state level impact of recent changes to the Clean Water Act. At the core of both conversations is the challenge of state purview of management.

Proponents of establishing a western energy suggest that consumers would receive increased reliability and lower costs for energy. They also argued that cybersecurity would be increased due centralized management rather than the 38 different versions currently in place throughout the region. Ensuring a robust conversation, presenters also provided a review of historical opposition to establishing an RTO and answered numerous questions from committee members and other attendees.

After a review of the Section (401) of the Clean Water Act, focus was given to recent changes and their impact on states. Because federal license and permits for energy projects involving discharge into navigable waters must be reviewed by the state where the discharge occurs, this section has become one of the most important tools for states to control resource developments within their borders. In addition to recent changes, several court cases are also poised to impact states. Drawing from this information, members engaged in a review of regional projects likely to be impacted in an effort to identify collective solutions.

Session Speakers:

Darrell Early – Deputy Attorney General, Chief, Natural Resources Division, Office of the Idaho Attorney General

Dr. Douglas Howe – Director, Western Grid Group

Annual Legislative Training Assembly I (ALTA)

What if the beliefs people hold about stress and it's influence on our lives is reversed? So many have been led to believe that stress is a threat to health and happiness that people believe any level of distress has a negative impact on our lives. During this session, attendees reviewed recent data which indicates that reversing this assumed formula can change the impact that stress has on both physical and mental health. Through conversation and individual work assignments, personal stress markers were identified and used to build a stress management plan designed to help attendees shift their perception of stress from a threat to a challenge and achieve increased productivity, as well as longevity.

Session Facilitator:

Scott Raecker – Executive Director, The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University

North America Summit

With technological advances and increased global competition, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico are facing alarming skills gaps and mismatches that could significantly impact the economic success of North America as a whole. Presenters offered attendees information and insights related to reskilling efforts from a broad perspective, as well as details of Canadian efforts. Citing the McKinsey Global Institute, discussion included data that by the year 2030, 375-million workers in the global workforce will need to change occupations or undergo training for new skills. This information and other details prompted an engaged conversation with a consensus that to remain competitive, collaboration among the North American nations will be vital.

Session Speakers:

Stéphane Lessard - Consul General, The Consulate General of Canada in Denver

The Honourable Wayne Easter, Member of Parliament, Canada

Earl Anthony Wayne - Career Ambassador (ret.) & Public Policy Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Thursday, July 18

Suicide Prevention Forum

Hosted by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), this session focused on summary recommendations for creating a successful state suicide prevention infrastructure with input from stakeholders and experts around the country. Together this information offers a blueprint for states to develop successful programs based on best practices. The full report is available and has been approved by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA).

The presentation outlined six core recommendations to ensure a successful state infrastructure for suicide prevention and provided a copy of the state suicide prevention coordinators for the western states. Through group discussion presenters also relayed the importance of action by state legislatures to ensure successful implementation of the recommendations.

Session Speakers:

Julie Ebin – Manager of Special Initiatives, Suicide Prevention Resource Center at Education Development Center

Linda Newell – Former Senator, Colorado State Senate

Economic Development Committee

Efforts to foster economic growth remain a priority among western states and during this session members and attendees engaged with presenters to address best practices for assessing the effectiveness of tax incentives, as well as opportunity zones. Presenters shared information and experiences that fostered conversation of successes and lessons learned.

Discussion of incentives addressed both the development and evaluation process with key recommendations of beginning with the end goal in mind and ensuring leadership at a local level to support economic efforts. When establishing goals, however, it is vital to ensure that they are measurable allowing assessment of success. A discussion of opportunity zones offered regulatory updates, recent developments, and state overviews. Included in the information was data indicating that of the 8,766 opportunity zones throughout the 50 states, there are 1,695 in the western region. In Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming more than half of these zones are located outside of metro areas. Communities embracing these and other growth policies are experiencing positive results.

Session Speakers:

Brett Doney – President & CEO, Great Falls Montana Development Authority & High Plains Financial

Kenan Fikri – Research Director, Economic Innovation Group

Mark Robyn – Senior Officer, The Pew Charitable Trusts' State Fiscal Health Project

Canada Relations Committee

The relationship between Canada and the United States enjoys a rich history. During this session, attendees participated in a conversation reviewing the commonalities, differences, and relationship strengths that make the partnership of these nations key to joint success. Beginning with an informative comparison of government structures, the conversation highlighted the need for understanding to maintain a solid partnership. Beyond governmental processes, presenters also discussed the intertwined connection related to business interactions, as well as shared natural resources such as waterways. An interactive discussion with attendees highlighted the complex nature of this relationship and the imperative need to educate residents on both sides of the border to ensure collective efforts to address trade, security, and energy resources.

Session Speaker:

Dr. Ross Burkhart – Professor of Political Science, Boise State University

Kathy Eichenberger - Executive Director, Columbia River Treaty Electricity and Alternative Energy Division; British Columbia Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources

Legislative Oversight Working Group

Comprised of select members from across the Western region, the Legislative Oversight Working Group convened for its first in-person gathering to continue the group's recent conversations via conference call. The members of the Working Group focused on identifying what content should be incorporated into a Legislative Oversight Handbook that will provide legislators information and tools to strengthen financial oversight, administrative rules, and the review of existing body of laws to ensure that they reflect current needs and/or priorities. The development of a Legislative Oversight Handbook was identified as one of the Group's priority projects for the biennium.

The members also agreed that to better understand existing legislative oversight practices in the region, it will be important to solicit and obtain some key information. To initiate the gathering of information, members developed questions that they, along with their staff, will research prior to their next gathering. The responses to these questions will be catalogued and will form part of the Legislative Oversight Handbook. Working Group members are enthusiastic about continuing to learn from one another and to share best practices that they can utilize in their respective institutions. The Working Group plans to convene conference calls in the coming months and will meet formally, again, during the 73rd CSG West Annual Meeting in Jackson, Wyoming.

Agriculture Committee

Throughout the western region, agriculture plays a vital role for states by producing jobs and revenue. During this session, members and attendees engaged presenters in conversation on the topics of food and livestock safety.

The presentation on food safety concentrated on the Food Modernization Act. Focused on standards related to growing, harvesting, processing, and packaging this act sets a baseline standard from the federal level. Although the standards are set nationally, the responsibility for inspection and monitoring of the standards is conducted at the state level. Due to the broad reach of these standards, consumer preferences have driven market response with the addition of supplemental standards such as organic certifications and other state level requirements. Also included in the food safety paradigm is the maintenance of healthy livestock, wild and domestic.. In the West, transboundary purchase and transport of livestock is commonplace requiring attentive testing and surveillance to ensure safe product for producers and hunters alike.

Session Speakers:

Dr. Bill Barton, DVM – Administrator and State Veterinarian, Animal Industries Division, Idaho State Department of Agriculture

Toby Boudreau – Wildlife Bureau Chief, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Jeff Farrar, DVM, MPH, PhD – Director of Intergovernmental Relations and Partnerships, Office of Foods and Veterinary Medicine, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Lynn Nakamura-Tengan – Associate Extension Educator, Department of Human Nutrition, Food & Animal Sciences, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Education Committee

Teachers are vital to the success of education efforts, but the ability to recruit and retain them has become a challenge. Perceptions surrounding conditions – low pay, lack of training, etc. – have tarnished the profession and turned many college graduates away from the classroom as a career. During this session, members engaged with presenters and attendees to discuss current information, trends, and best practices to work towards a solution to this ongoing dilemma.

Ensuring opportunity for in-depth discussion, the committee focused on two topic areas – recruitment and retention, and competency-based education (CBE). During a review of successful practices related to recruitment and retention, four key areas were identified as mattering most to teachers. These areas include financial compensation, preparation for teaching duties, mentor programs for new teachers, and good working conditions with strong administrative leadership. States that have used these criteria as a base for their efforts have found success in both recruitment and retention.

A review of efforts in Idaho provided a case study in competency-based education which led to an interactive dialogue about the successes and challenges of implementation. Included in the presentation were recommendations to establish criteria for competencies, how assessments will be performed, and the outcome goals for students, teachers and parents prior to implementation. Through the programs, the state has seen increased transparency on education expectations, rise in student desire to learn, more flexibility, increase in successful student outcomes, and stronger academic knowledge.

Session Speakers:

Kelly Brady – Director of Instructional Support for Student-Centered Learning, Idaho State Department of Education

Tara Kini – Director of State Policy, Learning Policy Institute

“Everyone on a team is responsible for moving the team forward.”

Alison Levine – July 18 Keynote Speaker

Friday, July 19

Water & Environment Committee

During this session, members and attendees heard from topic experts on climate adaptation, private land conservation, and wild fisheries management in the western region. Following brief presentations, an open discussion ensued on trends, resources, and identified best practices. Several examples were given of restoration projects undertaken on private ranches with positive impact on both the issue intended to be resolved, as well as unanticipated benefits downstream. A key point made from these examples is that restorative strategies do not always require large capital investment but can be achieved through careful observation and leveraging of available resources.

On the broader topic of climate adaptation, discussions focused on efforts of scientists, biologists, and ecologists to study the impact of climate changes on ecosystems. While it is likely that some species will be severely impacted in this change, attention is being given to the evaluation of ecosystems undergoing adaptation. As knowledge of these ecosystem adjustments increases, predictors of human adaptation can also be determined.

Session Speakers:

Patrick Byorth – Director for Montana Water Project, Trout Unlimited

Scott Christensen – Deputy Director, Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Erik Kalsta – Kalsta Ranch Company



Census 2020

More than just a complex undertaking every ten years, the census count has far-reaching implications at many levels. During this session, presenters offered an overview of the partnerships needed between federal and state governments to ensure a successful census tally. With implications for government representation, the electoral college, redistricting, federal funding, and economic growth, it is vital that accurate information is collected during the upcoming census. One key component to a successful count is the collaborative relationship between U.S. Census Bureau partners and State and Local Complete Count Committees (CCCs). Utilization of local community partnerships and resources provides an element of trust thereby increasing the likelihood of willing respondents – particularly in hard to count areas. As preparations continue, CCCs will actively identify strategies for greater outreach and increased response to ensure the most accurate information can be collected.

Session Speakers:

Mallory Bateman – State Data Center Coordinator, Kem. C. Gardner Policy Institute at University of Utah

Mary Craigle – Bureau Chief, Research and Information Bureau of Montana Department of Commerce

Michael Hall – Los Angeles Regional Census Center, U.S. Census Bureau

Vicki McIntire – Assistant Regional Director, Denver Regional Office of the U.S. Census Bureau



Westrends Board

The Westrends Board facilitated a discussion on two issues currently altering the public policy landscape in the West – advances in telehealth and Blockchain technology. Starting with an overview of how telehealth is transforming the way people meet their health needs, as well as the rise of state telehealth legislation across the country, presenters highlighted the work of the Washington State Telehealth Collaborative which provides a forum to improve health through collaboration, sharing of knowledge, and increasing awareness of telehealth services. The importance of broadband support enabling effective telehealth services, as well as some of the challenges of incorporating telehealth platforms for providers was also discussed. Recommendations for lawmakers to consider included changing Medicaid reimbursement policies, establishing strategies to deploy broadband into rural areas, and supporting ongoing evaluation and research.

On the issue of Blockchain, participants were provided an overview of what Blockchain is, how it works, and what some states are doing to enhance governance, particularly as it relates to digital assets, utility tokens, and special depositories. Conversation also included potential uses of Blockchain for state and local governments, including death certificates, vehicle titles, and contracts. Presenters also reviewed the challenges of applying new technologies to old processes which may inhibit their applicability and effectiveness.

Session Speakers:

Dante Giancola – Vice President Government Affairs, Ownum

John Scott, MD, MSc – Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Washington

Jennifer Stoll – Executive Vice President Government Relations and Public Affairs, OCHIN

Representative Mike Yin – Wyoming House of Representatives



Annual Legislative Training Assembly II (ALTA)

Effective leaders have a key behavior trait in common. They possess a capacity to get their ideas heard, recognized, and considered by others. More than a stand-alone trait, the ability to influence others bears a connection to power and leadership. In this session, participants explored the various styles of influence and how their personal style, used correctly, can garner respect and trust. Group conversation and interactive exercises allowed the exploration of nuances between influence styles, as well as power dynamics at work when attempting to influence a particular outcome. One key interaction between participants elicited the recommendation to scrap the Golden Rule, which is the principle of treating others as you want to be treated, in favor of the Platinum Rule, as shared by Dr. Miller – “Do unto others as they wish to be done unto.” When accounting for the unique styles and preferences of others, treating others the way you wish to be treated may not facilitate successful outcomes.

Session Facilitator:

Dr. Danny Miller – President, New Heights Learning, LLC

“We have to get the idea out of our head that
people aren’t worth it.”

Shon Hopwood – July 19 Keynote Speaker

U.S. Supreme Court Review

Decisions made by the U.S. Supreme Court impact states in many ways. In this session, attendees heard updates on the court’s shifting dynamics, as well as cases with particular relevance to the western region. With the appointment of Justice Brett Kavanaugh, the court has experienced a shift towards a more conservative majority. While speculations abound, only time will tell exactly how this change will impact decisions on a long-term basis. During the last term, Chief Justice John Roberts fulfilled a more moderate role joining liberal members in the census case and conservative members in the partisan gerrymandering case. In the partisan gerrymandering case, the court held that such cases are non-justiciable, i.e. cannot be heard, in federal court, which is one of the most significant rulings of this century. Only one decision from the last term will require a number of states to rewrite a law. This case involved durational residency requirements for alcohol retailers. For the upcoming term, the court has accepted numerous cases of interest to states including a gun case, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Bridgegate. Stay tuned for more judicial updates.

Session Speaker:

Lisa Soronen – Executive Director, State & Local Legal Center

Saturday, July 20

Chair's Forum – Forest and Rangeland Management

With fires becoming more frequent occurrences throughout the western region, this forum set out to host a conversation on best practices, challenges, and recommendations for improving forest and rangeland management. Throughout the forum, two points became the key focus of conversation – the need for more collaborative efforts and better understanding of the impacts of ecological changes.

The ecology of western lands has necessitated a shift in our methods, as well as expectations, of land use. Technological tools such as the Resource Analysis Platform can offer insights into the changes in plant growth over time. This information provides vital feedback to landowners on the growth or decline of plants for more effective assessment of fire prevention methods. Non-native plants are also a key element in prevention as they are less resistant in the summer months and tend to dry out creating stockpiles of fire fuel. A key recommendation to address non-native plants is livestock grazing which minimizes the plant growth. A more complex factor discussed is the expectation of land use. The use of management methods based on historical expectations of goods and services produced by forests should no longer be considered the most effective. Through shifts in use demands related to recreation, as well as a decline in resources such as truck drivers and timber mills, the balance of need and management ability have become increasingly difficult.

As discussion turned to policy efforts, the consensus revolved around the need for collaborative efforts through all levels of government. Consultation of professionals at the local level was cited as a key factor in the effective crafting and implementation of policy to ensure that local expertise is paired with government resources provided by entities such as the Good Neighbor Authority of the 2014 Farm Bill.

Forestry Management Speakers:

Sonya Germann – State Forester, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Dr. Klaus Puettmann - Edmund Hayes Professor in Silviculture Alternatives, Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society, Oregon State University

Rangeland Management Speakers:

Dr. Jane Mangold – Associate Professor & Extension Invasive Plant Specialist, Montana State University Bozeman

Dr. Jeff Mosley – Rangeland Management Specialist, Montana State University Extension

Kyle Tackett - Partnership Coordinator and Resource Conservationist, Initiatives for the Natural Resources Conservation Service